

Act for fair funding in the federal Budget

Members of Victoria's 500 Catholic school communities will be watching next month's federal budget to see if the Turnbull Government is serious about tackling their concerns over the Gonski 2.0 debacle, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) Executive Director Stephen Elder says.

'It's been less than 12 months since Malcolm Turnbull and Education Minister Simon Birmingham stood up to announce a new era of fair funding had arrived, yet in that time over 600 Catholic schools across the nation have already lost an average of nearly \$600,000 each, or just under \$2,000 per student,' Mr Elder said.

'The fine print of the Gonski 2.0 legislation – discovered only after the bill had passed the Senate – showed that over-funded independent schools will transition down to their new funding levels over 10 years, while their Catholic equivalents will have just six years to accommodate the changes, leaving them over \$1 billion out of pocket.

'This not only makes a mockery of Mr Turnbull and Senator's Birmingham "no more special deals" rhetoric. It can't be called "needs-based funding" either.

'About one hundred thousand families have students in a Catholic school across the state. We are the biggest school system after the government sector by far.

'Spread those families across Victoria's 38 federal electorates and they have real punch at the ballot box.

'That's why, with the whiff of an election in the air, we expect to see signs on 8 May the Turnbull Government has recognised the need to rebuild bridges with the Catholic education community.'

Mr Elder said Catholic school communities expect action on three key priorities.

'We expect to see signs in the forward estimates that no special deals means no special deals; that the transition measures for non-government schools don't see the smaller, more exclusive independent sector given a four year free ride that leaves Catholic schools over \$1 billion behind.

'We expect to see signs to show the government is serious when it talks about needs-based funding and is prepared to finally act on the recommendations of the Final Report of the Gonski Review Panel from more than five years ago and replace the fatally-flawed school socio-economic status, or SES, score system.

'We expect to find clear indications that the government is looking at fair and accurate measures of need for non-government schools – measures that won't slash funding for Catholic parish schools while lining the pockets of wealthy independent schools.

'With Gonski 2.0, Mr Turnbull and Senator Birmingham put the horse before the cart. With the Budget, they can begin to put things right.'

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